



# Team Salk Parent Survival Guide

Dear Team Salk Parent/Guardian,

The first week of school is often overwhelming, not only for your child, but also for you. You will have to sign a ton of papers and read a bunch of teacher letters. Don't worry! After the first week, you'll get a chance to rest!

We created this packet to offer some insight on how to best help your child navigate through the middle school. **Please refer to this packet as the school year progresses.**

We are looking forward to a great school year!

Sincerely,  
TEAM SALK



## Contacting the Teachers

The best way to contact us is via email. We will do our best to answer you as quickly as possible. Our days are very busy, so if we do not answer you right away, we are not ignoring you.



**Language Arts:**

**Social Studies:**

**Math:**

**Science:**

Mrs. Barb Brown

Ms. Melissa Giaquinto

Ms. Mary Collins

Mrs. Melissa Markowski

[brownb@pt-sd.org](mailto:brownb@pt-sd.org)

[giaquintom@pt-sd.org](mailto:giaquintom@pt-sd.org)

[collinsm@pt-sd.org](mailto:collinsm@pt-sd.org)

[markowskim@pt-sd.org](mailto:markowskim@pt-sd.org)

# X Marks the Spot: What You Need to Know...



## **#1: We have your child's best interests at heart.**

As a team of teachers, we are able to better focus on your student and discuss his/her progress across our four subject areas. We will come to know your child very well. We care enough to know their handwriting, note their interests, and recall the achievements and mistakes they commonly make. We will lend a helping hand when needed and the "eye" when they're trying to slide by without doing their best. We are on the same team.

## **#3: We can't teach your child if he/she is not present in class.**

Attendance directly affects your student's ability to learn in class. Due to the pacing and rigor of our curriculum, students who miss regularly struggle to stay on track with the rest of their peers. Although we are usually available for extra help in the mornings or during the study lab period, it is difficult to reteach full lessons in an abbreviated time period.

### **If your child is truly sick, keep him/her home!**

- Check the middle school homework website to stay up-to-date on daily assignments.
- If your child is out for three days, please contact the Main Office (724-941-2688 x4243) to ask them to collect assignments. Please call as early as possible to ensure teachers have enough time to get work together.

## **#2: It will be hard sometimes...**

The jump from the elementary level to the secondary level is the biggest change yet. The secondary level requires more time, more effort, and more planning.

### **In elementary school, students are...**

- taught by a handful of teachers who teach multiple subjects
- with the same group of classmates all day long
- closely monitored by their classroom teacher

### **In middle school, students are...**

- taught by content-specific teachers
- placed on teams, but change classes throughout the day
- given more individual freedoms

Please know that we will never leave your child unsupported even if he/she feels lost. A big part of our job is knowing just how far, when, and how much to push academically. We call those moments "planned struggle." It allows him/her to find strength and build resiliency. Give your student time to work on a problem without rushing in and "saving" him/her. We know that'll be hard, but it's in his/her best interest.

### **Vacation? We're jealous!**

- Asking for missing assignments ahead of time would be a good idea. Please make sure your child tells us about a week in advance so we have time to compile work.
- If work is provided in advance, **it is expected that your student will complete it prior to returning to school.**

#### #4: Don't be too trusting of your middle school student.

Many of our middle school kiddos will do whatever they can to avoid work, consequences, talking about their day, or talking about what is bothering them. At this age, their attitudes and behaviors change...and sometimes they don't even realize it.

#### HOMESCHOOL

**If your student says they're going to work on their homework in their bedroom,** chances are there is something way more interesting in that room - perhaps a TV, phone, computer, video game, Netflix, etc. We know adolescent kids are multi-taskers, but how many people really believe that a teen/tween can resist all of these temptations and give real attention to their studies? **Suggest the kitchen table or the office instead.**

**If your student says they've already finished their homework,** ask to see it. "I did it in study lab" or "I didn't have any homework" are two of the excuses that are often untrue. Students can rarely finish all of their homework in study lab. Ask him/her to show you the "completed" work or to pull up the homework website. If your student cannot prove he/she has completed the work, we have a bigger problem. **Double. check. everything.**

#### SOCIAL

**They care more about the opinions of their peers than pretty much anything else.** Your student will do things that make no sense to you, like not turning in an assignment you know he/she worked hard on because he/she was distracted by someone or something. Your teen may refuse to eat something they usually enjoy because someone at their lunch table declared it gross. Remind them to be themselves and an individual. **Build them up.** Character is more important than reputation. It is the most important lesson you can teach them.

**They're less likely to share info with you.** Unfortunately, pulling away from parents is a normal part of adolescence. Although kids this age need adult guidance possibly more than any other time in their lives, they'd rather depend on a peer. Even though their answers have become shorter ("fine" or "ok" are their favorites), they still appreciate that you're interested. Even if they make you feel like you're bothering them, keep it up. Those one word answers will eventually morph into a full conversation one day. Stay interested. Stay involved. Stay open.

**They are horrified by what their bodies are doing.** For those of us who are well past adolescence, it's easy to forget what it was like to deal with the constant betrayal that comes with a new body. Voices are changing and zits are forming. Every couple of weeks, some new phenomenon introduces itself into the middle schooler's physical life, threatening to destroy their social lives until high school graduation. Don't draw attention to it. All you can do is encourage them to take care of their bodies. **Oh, and please, please, PLEASE remind them to apply deodorant, wash their hair, and brush their teeth every morning.** We appreciate it. Did we mention deodorant?

**Technology rocks and sucks at the same time.** Kids have access to each other 24/7 these days. As a result, peer issues grow exponentially with technology. **Be aware of when, where, and how much your child uses their phone.** Kids can't escape a tough situation if they're constantly in contact with it. Help them gain perspective by encouraging them to take a technology break. We suggest checking their phones periodically to ensure they're using technology safely and appropriately.

# Top Three Reasons Students Fail

1

## Not doing homework

Students who do not complete nightly homework regularly earn lower test scores. Because homework figures into overall quarter grades, those suffer as well.

2

## Organization

Students who are unable to stay organized tend to miss more assignments and forget test dates. Whether they lose papers to the blackhole that is their book bag or refuse to write homework in their assignment books, it contributes to lower grades.

3

## Study Skills

Many students do not know how to study for assessments. They resort to old habits and expect the same results. Suggest different techniques - each kid absorbs information differently.

# Team Salk Spirit Wear

We are all about team spirit on Team Salk. We encourage your student to get a PTMS shirt to wear for team spirit days and homeroom intramural competition days. You will receive ordering information from us within the first month of school. We're looking for 100% purple pride this year!



## What You Can Do To Help Your Child Adjust

### Check PowerSchool Frequently

Access it on the PTMS website via the left menu by clicking the "PowerSchool" heading and launching the portal. If you need help setting up an account, contact Tina Cramer (724-941-2688 x4247).

- ➔ You can set it up to receive email grade updates. Log into PowerSchool and click on the **Email Notification** button. Once there, check off the information that you'd like to receive about your student, how often you'd like to receive it, and whether you want that information sent to you immediately. Be sure to include the email address where you would like the information sent and press the blue **Submit** button. You can enter multiple email addresses by separating them with a comma.

### Check Student's Planner & Homework Website

Students are responsible for writing down their homework in class each day. To check your student's homework, use the PTMS Homework website, which can be accessed by visiting the PTMS website and clicking on "MS Homework Online" under "Useful Information" on the right side. We are listed under "Team Salk" by teacher name. All special classes are listed beneath the teams in alphabetical order. It is updated daily.

### Stay on them!

- ➔ Monitor bedtime - if they're getting less than 8 hours of sleep, what kind of tomorrow will they have?
- ➔ Model how to prioritize homework and projects.
- ➔ Encourage them to study more than one night before the test.
- ➔ If they struggle in a certain subject, you may have to be more involved. If the struggle continues, suggest they complete that subject during study lab and visit their teacher for help, then contact their teacher.